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ABSTRACT

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Student And Professional Attitudes Regarding Advertising Influence On Broadcast News Content: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Students studying Broadcast Journalism or Advertising and professionals working in those fields were surveyed on their attitudes regarding advertising influence on broadcast news content. This study compares the attitudes of the students and practitioners in the respective professions. While students and professionals agreed on a majority of opinion statements, the areas where there was significant disagreement hold important implications for preparing students in both disciplines for the realities of the marketplace.

Student And Professional Attitudes Regarding Advertising Influence On Broadcast News Content: A Comparative Study

Introduction

This paper reviews the results of a comparison of student and practitioner attitudes regarding advertising influence on broadcast news content. As will be reviewed below, much has been written about the pressures advertisers place on news organizations in general and television news in particular, both overt pressure on story selection and slant, and the more subtle but no less important pressures brought to bear by an emphasis on ratings supremacy. This study seeks to answer the following research question:

> Every year, large numbers of students graduate from communications programs and enter the broadcast journalism and advertising professions. How do those students' opinions on the topic of advertising influence on broadcast news content compare to the opinions of practitioners already working in the broadcast journalism and advertising fields?

If the students' opinions do differ significantly from those of practitioners in the students' chosen field, the discrepancies might raise some questions about curricular issues. Accordingly, this study also discusses the implications suggested for communications educators.

Literature Review

Advertising vs. News

Perhaps not surprisingly, much of what has been written in both the academic and trade press about advertising influence on news content takes the perspective of journalism organizations, those being "sinned against." For example, McManus (1995) identifies the advertising industry as one of ten players who interact to shape news production in American journalism. McManus characterizes advertisers as "the providers of the income that fuels the enterprise" (p. 310), and views their relationship with the news organization as one of exchange, where the advertiser pays the news organization to provide an audience

for the advertiser's message. McManus goes on to note that "an individual advertiser ... may exert pressure over what becomes news, and perhaps even more over what does not" (p. 320). Through direct or implied threats to withhold advertising dollars as punishment for unfavorable news coverage, advertisers are viewed as able to influence news content.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) discuss five forces that influence media content: individual media workers, media routines, organizational influences, outside influences, and ideology. Advertising is identified as one of the chief outside influencing agents, along with sources, the government, the marketplace, and technology. Shoemaker and Reese provide several examples of situations where large advertisers have sought to directly influence news content in order to quell negative coverage.

Other researchers have surveyed journalists in an attempt to assess the scope and nature of advertiser influence. Soley and Craig (1992) queried 150 newspaper editors, finding that nearly 90% reported strong advertiser pressures on content. Curtin (1998) conducted in-depth interviews with newspaper reporters and editors and also conducted a national survey among newspaper editors to look at perceptions of advertising influence. She found that perceptions of advertiser influence were strongly held among the journalists surveyed.

As noted earlier, most discussions of advertising influence on news content tend to take one of two approaches, either focusing on specific incidents where an advertiser has brought direct pressure to bear in an attempt to influence news coverage of their business (Auletta 1997; Overholser 1997), or examining the indirect pressure that comes from advertisers' preference for programming with high ratings (Clary 1997; Underwood 1993). A recent example of the former is Indianapolis-based Marsh Supermarkets' decision to pull its ads from the *Indianapolis Business Journal* (and to stop selling the paper in its stores) after the publication ran a story commenting on the decreasing value of the grocery chain's stock (McLaren 1999). Similarly, editors at *American Journalism Review* have speculated that Gannett's recent decision to cancel its advertising in that publication was, at least in

part, a reaction to a story criticizing Gannett's management of *The Des Moines Register* (Barringer 1999).

Ratings pressure has been blamed for the apparently increasing tendency of broadcast news programs to offer viewers stories that are only "news" by the broadest of all possible definitions, such as news stories tied to the lead-in entertainment programming on the same station (Aucoin 1999). Underwood is particularly harsh in his criticism of broadcast journalism practices, charging that "the hunger for ratings has pushed television news executives to become ever more commercial in their search for the audience" (1993, p. 64).

In the broadcast newsroom in particular, advertising influence is often tied to profitability concerns. Local station news operations are known for generating large profits for their corporate owners; in a 1996 survey of news departments, 72% reported that they had made a profit during the previous year while only 4% of the stations responding reported a loss on news operations (Papper et al 1996). News is the cash cow in many broadcast operations (Smith 1997). McManus' model of news production "suggests that for mass-mediated news supported by advertising, achieving the greatest return requires a subordination of most journalism norms to market norms" (1995, p. 327). Given the profit pressures on broadcast journalism operations, the potential for advertiser influence is very real, and very disturbing. As Howard Kurtz pointed out in a *Columbia Journalism Review* roundtable in Spring 1998, "If you're in the business of basically being a transmission belt for a particular advertiser, then your first allegiance is to the advertiser" ("The erosion of values" 1998).

The reoccurring themes in the discussion of advertising influence on news content are concepts like credibility (Herbert 1998), impartiality (Joseph 1998), and integrity (Hentoff 1998). These are contrasted with statements on paying the bills (Overholser 1997), business enterprise (Auletta 1997), and increasing the audience for broadcast news (Clary 1997). In essence, the debate comes down to a contrast between journalism ideals

and commercial realities. McManus (1995) characterizes the tension quite simply: "The principal *norm of journalism*, whether broadcast or print, is to inform the public ... The principal *norm of business* is to maximize profits over an indefinite period" (p. 308, italics in original). Chicago's Carol Marin, herself a self-described victim of ratings-driven newsroom politics, put it succinctly: "...the worst corruption of all is the creeping commercialism" ("The erosion of values" 1998).

While not strictly news-related, a relatively recent addition to the realm of "creeping commercialism" also bears noting, if only because the medium in question is getting increasing attention in both broadcast journalism and advertising curricula. The internet is proving fertile ground for mixing advertising and editorial content. The recent attention given to Amazon.com's admission that many of the books on its "recommended" list were there, at least in part, as a result of payment from publishers has led several observers to point out the risks inherent in the relatively unmediated content of many web sites (Alsop 1999; Kirchner 1999; Hansell & Hoarmon 1999). As Alsop (1999) puts it, "The [World Wide] Web shakes things up so much that it's nearly impossible to tell the difference between a retailer and an editor" (p. 175). And Kirchner (1999) gets to the essence of the issue: "In this business [web-based communication], if readers and viewers can't trust the honesty of your editorial content they won't be as likely to respond to the advertising you carry. Advertisers then shy away and find other methods of reaching potential buyers. Editors who cross the line risk losing readers and advertisers" (p. 30). Of course, most communicators would agree that trust and credibility are just as important in traditional media forms as on the Web.

Despite the inherent risks, journalistic enterprises, including broadcast news operations, must work within commercial reality, striving to attract both an audience and advertisers. And advertisers must determine how to take advantage of the still-credible position that television news enjoys within most communities without diluting that credibility through attempts to influence content. These are the market dynamics within

which today's broadcast journalism and advertising students must be prepared to work. Are students learning lessons that will help them deal with these professional realities?

Professional Education

Much of the dialogue between communication industry professionals and academicians that has occurred in recent years has centered on issues of curricular design for career preparation. Kendrick, Slayden and Broyles (1996) surveyed advertising agency creative directors regarding their views on the role universities play (and should play) in preparing students for creative careers. Many of their respondents felt that academe needed to do a better job of alerting students to the realities of the working world. Similarly, Otnes, Oviatt and Triese (1995) conducted in-depth interviews with advertising agency creative personnel, specifically discussing curricular issues. One of the key issues identified in this study was the importance of educating students about agency politics and interpersonal issues.

On the broadcasting side, Duhé and Zukowski (1997) surveyed broadcast journalism sequence chairs and television station news directors to explore the groups' opinions on ideal curricula for career preparation. News directors' preferences were for curricula that provided students with a great deal of on-air news laboratory experience, preparing them for real newsroom jobs.

Hilt and Lipschultz (1996) took an approach similar to that used in the present study, asking both broadcast journalism students and broadcast managers and news directors their opinions in a number of areas related to job preparation and entry level hiring. (All of the students were taking part in journalism internships at the time of the study.) Most of the areas where there were significant differences in means between the students and the professionals revealed the biases inherent in a university education. Students placed more value on a college degree and specific college major as hiring criteria than did the professionals. And, students rated the skills they learned in their college courses more highly than the professionals did.

Each of the studies reviewed above looks at professional views related to curricular issues for either advertising or broadcast journalism, but not across programs, which was an important goal of the present study. The previous research suggests that whether students are learning the necessary lessons to deal with professional reality is very much a matter of perspective. That is, the studies cited above all demonstrate a great deal of subjectivity, similar to the previously-reviewed literature on advertising's influence on news content.

Journalism vs. Persuasion

One final area of review to set the stage for the present study is the tensions that often exist between journalism and persuasion-based programs housed within the same academic unit. A number of the academicians and practitioners interviewed for Medsger's pivotal report, *Winds of Change*, decried the presence of public relations and advertising programs cheek-by-jowl with journalism. Joan Konner of Columbia University stated that "To assume public relations and journalism are the same study is a perversion of the language" (p. 145). Brian Steffen of Simpson College in Iowa took a more global position: "With fewer students wanting to be reporters who (in theory) will question and examine the system, and more wanting to be in PR and advertising, most of which is designed to promote the status quo, our democracy suffers" (p. 152). And Mitchell Stephens of NYU was direct: "Remove advertising and public relations from the curriculum. They belong in business schools" (p. 152).

On the other hand, Medsger's report placed some value on the potential for interaction between a variety of points of view. "Frontline" producer Irv Drasnin suggested a curriculum that would "Confront students with choices -- new choices, policy decisions, deadline pressures. Make them consider the options and their consequences" (p. 158). Medsger's own recommendations call for the academy to "Teach in ways that help students develop as problem-spotters of the issues of both the society they will cover and

the profession they will enter. Teach them to be constant explorers beyond the world of their own experience, knowledge, interest, and comfort" (p. 68).

Wilkins (1998) also argues convincingly for the importance of emphasizing critical thinking skills in the journalism curriculum, including attention to the tenets of political economy of the media. And Griffiths is adamant about the benefits of educating persuasive communicators (public relations students in his example) along with journalists: "...we [journalism faculty] should welcome the chance to influence the future public relations practitioners, without whom it would be difficult if not impossible for our up-and-coming reporters to penetrate public and private bureaucracies. ... Above all, it gives us a chance to preach and teach the one vital mission that journalism and public relations have in common -- the gathering and dissemination of accurate information" (1996, p. 82-83).

Summary

The three areas covered in this literature review (advertising influence, professional education, and the positioning of advertising within a journalism/communications curriculum) share a critical dimension of subjectivity. There are no clear-cut answers in any of these areas. How much advertising influence is there on news content and how concerned should we be about such influence, if it exists? What's the best model for providing professional education in either advertising or broadcast journalism? Does an advertising program really belong in a journalism or communications school? The fact that there are no easy answers points to the need for additional exploration of these issues, and may even argue for different research approaches. The present study offers a means of exploring the influence of advertising on broadcast news content in a way that helps to shed light on curricular and programmatic issues.

Method

Forty-three opinion statements dealing with dimensions of advertising influence on broadcast news content were gathered through two panel discussions (one in a Top 5 market and the other in a medium-sized market). Both panels were comprised of television

news and advertising industry practitioners. The audience for the large market panel was a group of journalism and advertising professionals; the audience for the second panel was made up of graduate students and faculty members at a major university communications program. In both cases, panelist and audience member comments were recorded and transcribed. Those statements were supplemented with other opinion statements from the trade press.

The resulting range of opinion statements dealt with several dimensions of the advertising influence on news content issue:

* Journalistic imperatives ("As important as it is for the news to make revenue, it's just as important to keep telling the truth") vs. commercial realities ("If you're the news operation that says, 'I'm not going to bow to advertisers, I'm going to stand by my journalistic standards,' you're not going to make money").
* Credibility ("If you have news product with integrity out there, people won't zap away from it") vs. ratings ("Going after ratings has to be a concern for a broadcast journalist").
* Audience-driven news content ("The audience really does rule what we see on television news") vs. advertiser-driven content ("Advertisers have more power over news content now than they used to").
* Personal solution to the influence problem is needed ("A journalist should not work for any news operation that puts any ratings pressure on them") vs. corporate-level solution is needed ("Any good news operation is a reflection of its market and hopefully the best things about it").

Five statements were selected to represent each end-point of the four dimensions, for a total of forty opinion statements. Three additional statements were added, two summarizing the overall issue ("It is important that journalism reflects today's realities -- namely, that news operations be mindful of what attracts an audience, and advertisers, if they wish to survive" and "It is troubling that advertising interferes with journalists'

attempts to tell stories of importance to the audience, and to tell them accurately and fairly, and it is up to journalists to resist that pressure") and one suggesting that the influence problem is stronger at the network level than at the local level. The complete list of opinion statements is shown in Exhibit 1.

The resulting group of forty-three opinion statements was organized into a questionnaire. Respondents were directed to indicate their degree of disagreement or agreement with each statement using a 9 point scale. Lower scale positions indicate greater disagreement with the particular statement. The questionnaire also included several demographic classification questions.

The student sample was drawn from seniors in capstone level advertising and broadcast journalism courses at a northeastern university communications program. These students were in their final semester of coursework; most, if not all, had completed one or more internships in their chosen field. As a result, they could be expected to be as ready to enter the field as their education could make them. A total of forty students completed the questionnaire, 22 in advertising and 18 in broadcast journalism.

The practitioner sample consisted of broadcast television station news directors, assignment editors and general sales managers and advertising agency media directors in seven U.S. markets. The selected markets represented a range of sizes (markets 2, 7, 66, 68, 73, 91, and 99) and geography. Sixty professionals responded to the survey: 11 news directors, 7 assignment editors, 8 general sales managers, and 34 media directors. (Response rate for the professional survey was 29%.)

The -4 (strongly disagree) to +4 (strongly agree) attitude scale completed by respondents was converted to a 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree) scale for purposes of analysis. On each of the 43 opinion statements, means for each of the six groups were calculated using the SPSSPC ONEWAY function. The Bonferroni test was used to identify differences in means between groups significant at the $p<.05$ level.

Results

For broadcast journalism students, there was no significant difference between their mean responses and those of the news directors on forty-one of the forty-three opinion statements. There were no significant differences in means between broadcast journalism students and assignment editors and only one significant difference in means between the students and general sales managers. When the comparison shifts to advertising students and agency media directors, those two groups were in agreement on thirty-eight of the forty-three statements. Those statements where there were significant differences in means between broadcast journalism students and broadcast news professionals are shown in Table 2; the comparison for advertising students and media directors is in Table 3.

The overwhelming number of statements where students and practitioners shared similar opinions is quite encouraging. Students in this program, which has a curriculum similar to those at most other accredited institutions, appear to embrace the norms of the professions they will be entering. As a result, they should not meet with many surprises when it comes to the issue of advertising influence on broadcast news content.

Broadcast Journalism Students vs. Station News Directors

The statements where there was significant disagreement between students and practitioners merit closer attention. We first discuss the broadcast journalism area, where broadcast journalism students differed significantly with television news directors on two statements. Broadcast journalism students were in fairly solid disagreement with the statement "If a news operation can go to anybody as a source on a story, they might as well use one of their advertisers as the source" (M=2.00, s.d.=1.57). News directors took more of a "middle of the road" position on the statement (M=4.91, s.d.=2.07), suggesting that the students leaned a little further in the direction of the journalistic imperative on the idea of that particular practice.

It was a different story in the case of the commercial-reality statement, "Advertising's bottom line is the buck, and the news organization's bottom line is the

dollar, too." Broadcast journalism students generally agreed with that statement (M=6.78, s.d.= 1.77), while news directors disagreed (M=2.82, s.d.=1.94). While the students were more idealistic when it came to sourcing, this statement seemed to reflect what is discussed in classes about the commercial reality of television news.

A pair of other statements, while not exhibiting statistically significant differences in means, seem to directionally confirm the two groups' reactions to the dimensions explored. Broadcast journalism students agreed with the statement, "Not enough journalists engage in whistle-blowing about malpractice in their own shops," (M=6.06, s.d.=1.39) while news directors slightly disagreed (M=4.09, s.d.=2.91). Broadcast journalism students were close to the middle, but in slight disagreement, with the statement "The audience really does rule what we see on television news," (M=4.83, s.d.=2.46), while the news directors were in more solid agreement (M=6.18, s.d.=2.18). It seems the broadcast students were aware of the economic realities of television news, but they tended to cling to a bit of idealism about journalism in this instance.

In addition to the disagreements with news directors, the broadcast journalism students did have one statistically significant area of disagreement with general sales managers. As with the news directors, that disagreement was over the statement "If a news operation can go to anybody as a source on a story, they might as well use one of their advertisers as the source," but the disagreement was even more pronounced in this case (Student M=2.00, s.d.=1.57; GSM M=6.12, s.d.=2.53). Students are far less willing to compromise in this area than appears to be the case with general sales managers.

Advertising Students vs. Agency Media Directors

If we can take pride in broadcast journalism students being somewhat more idealistic or even doctrinaire in their opinions compared to television station news directors and general sales managers, the areas of disagreement between advertising students and agency media directors give cause for concern to those who want advertising students to be aware of the wall between advertising and news that journalists value. One area of

disagreement is relatively easy to explain. In response to the statement "Advertiser influence on news content probably happens more often at the network level than at the local level," advertising students tended to agree (M=5.50, s.d.=2.11) while media directors disagreed (M=3.85, s.d.=1.92). Most of the advertising students in this study had completed internships with large advertising agencies with national advertiser clients, so, to the extent that the students were aware of influence problems, those problems were at a national level. While some of the media directors in this study were at agencies with national clients, they most likely deal more often with local or regional firms, and so see influence issues at that level.

In every other case where there was a significant difference in means between students and practitioners, the students appeared to be less inclined to see advertising influence as a problem and more inclined to sacrifice journalistic standards for commercial interests. For example, media directors tended to agree somewhat (M=5.82; s.d.=2.31) with the statement "A journalist should not work for any news operation that puts any ratings pressure on them." Advertising students, however, tended to disagree with the statement (M=3.86, s.d.=2.14). It may be that these about-to-graduate students were more mindful of career issues, but, given their responses on other statements, it seems more likely that they are simply less bothered by the emphasis put on ratings within news operations.

Similarly, advertising students tended to agree slightly with the statement "News departments function as the ideological arm of their chief sponsors -- the corporations whose advertising pays for what would otherwise be a losing business," while media directors tended to disagree with the statement. (Student M=5.32, s.d.=1.86; Media Director M=3.24, s.d.=2.16). Apparently, media directors saw more separation between "church and state" than did advertising students.

Media directors also seemed to place more value on the importance of news credibility than did advertising students, or at least seemed to see more potential for

problems with a newscast that is not credible. On the statement "If a news program has no credibility, there's no value to an advertiser in promoting its product near that," the media directors tended toward agreement, with a mean of 6.59 (s.d.=2.71). However, advertising students tended toward disagreement, with a mean of 4.23 (s.d.=2.94).

Perhaps most disturbing, in our view, was the students' response to the statement "It's in advertising's best interest to promote news programming free of commercial influence." This statement produced the greatest difference in means, and suggests a polarization between students and practitioners. Advertising students tended toward disagreement with the statement (M=4.73, s.d.=2.35). Conversely, media directors were in relatively strong agreement with the importance of keeping commercial influence out of the news (M=7.18, s.d.=2.23).

The troublesome nature of the areas of significant difference between advertising students and practitioners discussed above is underscored by several other statements where the means between the two groups, while not significantly different at the $p<.05$ level, are different enough directionally to merit attention. Advertising students agreed more strongly with each of the following statements than did media directors: "The smartest TV stations are the ones that realize that news and sales need to have a symbiotic relationship" (Student M=5.86, s.d.=2.03; Media director M=4.24, s.d.=2.40); "Going after ratings has to be a concern for a broadcast journalist" (Student M=7.23, s.d.=1.31; Media director M=5.97, s.d.=2.28); "It is important that journalism reflects today's realities -- namely, that news operations be mindful of what attracts an audience, and advertisers, if they wish to survive" (Student M=7.27, s.d.=1.28; Media director M=6.06, s.d.=2.14); and "Journalism is in the audience-gathering business" (Student M=6.32, s.d.=1.52; Media director M=5.15, s.d.=2.97). And, media directors agreed more strongly than advertising students that "Reporters and the news media have an obligation to be impartial and to have the appearance of impartiality" (Student M=7.45, s.d.=1.97; Media director M=8.18, s.d.=1.34).

Discussion

The preceding review of results indicates that while students and practitioners were in agreement on the vast majority of opinion statements related to advertising's influence on broadcast news content, there are areas of significant difference. What implications do those differences suggest for communications educators?

We were concerned with the direction and degree of difference between advertising students and media directors. Advertising students in the subject communications program take a communication and society overview course during their freshman year, a course that spends considerable time examining the interplay between the various journalism and media entities. The students are also required to take one course from a list of several courses that seek to provide critical perspectives on the media. And, issues of the relationship between advertising and editorial content (news as well as entertainment) come up in skills classes within the advertising major. Despite all of this, the survey results seem to indicate that advertising students are less bothered by the possibility of advertising influence on broadcast news content than are advertising agency media directors. We could assume that, once in the field, the students will modify their opinions and think more along the lines of current practitioners. That would be the best-case scenario. The worst-case scenario is that the present advertising students will do even more to blur the line between advertising and editorial when they get into the field. We offer the following suggestions in an effort to avoid the worst-case scenario.

One possible explanation for the differences in the student-practitioner relationship between those in advertising and those in broadcast journalism centers on what each group is taught about the other in the subject communications program. After the communications and society course described above, students in the different disciplines move into courses unique to their area, and have little formal contact with students in other majors. Discussions in advertising classes may examine television station personnel as clients, but

such discussions may not be taking into account the fact that journalistic independence is important to many of those personnel as well. Add to that the fact that students across disciplines in this communications program (like many others) are making heavy use of the World Wide Web, which, as described earlier, often mixes advertising and news content in new and sometimes troubling ways. The stage could be set for even more professional conflict in the future.

Because there are few opportunities in this curriculum for interaction between students of the two disciplines, the journalistic imperatives of their broadcast reporting counterparts don't show up on the advertising students' "radar screens." On the other hand, the broadcast journalism students, while idealistic, seemed also to be cognizant of the commercial realities of their field. Those subjects are covered in detail in classroom discussions throughout the broadcast journalism curriculum in this program. If the broadcast journalism students must be made aware of the need of their profession to make money, then the advertising students ought to learn of the need for journalists to maintain a "wall" between news and sales. It is our opinion that more opportunities should be provided for students in the two disciplines to formally interact, so that those in each major may learn a little of the craft norms of the other, following Griffiths' observations mentioned earlier.

Potential does exist for such interaction in the program's current curriculum. Broadcast journalism students are required to take "Critical Perspectives on News," a course which covers ethical challenges in the news media. Many print journalism and public relations students choose to take the course as well. Journalistic independence is one of many ethical issues the class tackles. Advertising students are permitted to take the course as an elective, though very few do, opting instead for critical issues courses in persuasion or visual communication, among others. The "Critical Perspectives on News" course represents a good opportunity for the advertising students to have meaningful exchanges with journalism students. Together the students could explore the interactions

of the professions they are studying. Perhaps encouraging such student interactions by strongly encouraging or even requiring all advertising students to take this ethics class would help both groups of students in the long run.

One other course where advertising students might directly confront the issue of advertising influence on news content is Advertising Media Sales. This course will be offered for the first time during the coming fall semester, and the plan is to have students do a great deal of role playing as sales reps making calls on clients. Perhaps an element of advertiser influence could be introduced into some of the role playing scenarios, both from the perspective of dealing with a prospective client who asks for editorial concessions and in mock interactions with persons representing station or publication editorial management in the role of reacting to such requests. This would force advertising students to think about the influence issue from both the commercial perspective they appear to be comfortable with and the less familiar journalistic perspective. And, equally important from a career preparation view, it would force them to articulate reasoned responses to such situations.

As should be clear from these suggestions, we embrace the joint education of future journalism and advertising practitioners, and we believe the results of this study underscore the need for such an approach. The two groups are constantly interacting in the marketplace, and they need to understand and appreciate one another's perspectives. As noted more than once above, the challenge may be even greater in the interactive media environment than it is with traditional broadcast media. (This is an area our students will be confronting soon as a result of the program agreeing to a series of joint ventures with a web site sponsored by the local newspaper. The plan is to involve students from all majors in the communications program in developing editorial and advertising content for the web site, and issues of "church and state" are certain to develop.) We believe that exiling advertising to the business school (as suggested by one of Medsger's respondents) would only exacerbate the problem of advertising influence on news content. Advertising

professionals cannot be expected to safeguard something they do not understand, and perhaps journalism students can learn a little more trust for their advertising counterparts as well. If the curricular changes discussed above are implemented, we could replicate this study with a new group of students to see whether there are changes in opinion.

Limitations

While we believe this study provides very useful insights on the similarities and differences in the attitudes of students and practitioners on the subject of advertising's influence on broadcast news content, we recognize that it is exploratory and not projectible. The professional component of the study was a census of news directors, assignment editors, general sales managers, and advertising agency media directors working in the seven selected markets, but the selection of those markets themselves was purposive and the low response rate makes projection inappropriate. The student sample is only representative of advertising and broadcast journalism students in one program, with its own curricular and instructional idiosyncrasies.

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Table 1

1. Not enough journalists engage in whistle-blowing about malpractice in their own shops.
2. Ad agencies seek to control the media.
3. A journalist should not work for any news operation that puts any ratings pressure on them.
4. Any good news operation is a reflection of its market and hopefully the best things about it.
5. The audience really does rule what we see on television news.
6. If a news operation can go to anybody as a source on a story, they might as well use one of their advertisers as the source.
7. If a news program has no credibility, there's no value to an advertiser in promoting its product near that.
8. Broadcast journalism IS entertainment; the content, to some degree, is influenced by the packaging.
9. In order to have a free democracy, we must have news that is free from the influence of advertisers.
10. It's news because people care about it.
11. Everything is sponsored now.
12. The smartest stations are the ones that realize that news and sales need to have a symbiotic relationship.
13. A journalist should not work for a news company that's going to look at a story based on how the advertisers will react.
14. Most news viewers will only watch two-minute segments.
15. It does come down to credibility in the newscast; there is a fallout from not adhering to a code of ethics.
16. Advertising's bottom line is the buck, and the news organization's bottom line is the dollar, too.
17. Reporters and the news media have an obligation to be impartial and to have the appearance of impartiality.
18. The two most important influences on news content are audience and revenue.
19. Emotion is really important in putting together news people will be engaged in.
20. Advertising people are too quick to knuckle under to pressure from their clients.
21. What exists in broadcast journalism today is a far cleaner, very upfront approach to advertiser influence.
22. As important as it is for the news to make revenue, it's just as important to keep telling the truth.
23. News departments function as the ideological arm of their chief sponsors -- the corporations whose advertising pays for what would otherwise be a losing business.
24. If you have news product with integrity out there, people won't zap away from it.
25. Going after ratings has to be a concern for a broadcast journalist.
26. It is important that journalism reflects today's realities -- namely, that news operations be mindful of what attracts an audience, and advertisers, if they wish to survive
27. In broadcast news, it's all about the remote control.
28. Advertiser influence on news content probably happens more often at the network level than at the local level.
29. It's in advertising's best interest to promote news programming free of commercial influence. .
30. You have to keep viewers engaged to keep them from tuning out or turning off.
31. The content of news has changed from what is important to what sells.
32. It is troubling that advertising interferes with journalists' attempts to tell stories of importance to the audience, and to tell them accurately and fairly. and it is up to journalists to resist that pressure.

Table 1 (continued)

33. Any time a corporate sponsor gets too close to a news operation it erodes the credibility of that operation.
34. Journalism should wrench back from the marketers the promotion of any news leads.
35. Advertising is both sustenance to a healthy news organization and a threat to its credibility and independence.
36. News operations should pay a lot more attention now to how stories are perceived by viewers, where the standup is done, how it's teased by the anchors.
37. A story doesn't belong in a newscast if it isn't news.
38. Journalism is in the audience-gathering business.
39. Advertisers have more power over news content now than they used to.
40. If news organizations give in to pressures to curry to advertisers, they are making a mistake.
41. Advertisers should concentrate on selling product and let journalists do their jobs.
42. If you're the news operation that says, "I'm not going to bow to advertisers, I'm going to stand by my journalistic standards," you're not going to make money.
43. Advertising people must uphold the value of journalistic impartiality.

Table 2

Statements with Significant Differences in Means Between Broadcast Journalism Students and News Directors

Statement	Broadcast Journalism Students x	s.d.	News Directors x	s.d.
6. If a news operation can go to anybody as a source on a story, they might as well use one of their advertisers as the source.	2.00	1.57	4.91	2.07
16. Advertising's bottom line is the buck, and the news organization's bottom line is the dollar, too.	6.78	1.77	2.82	1.94

Statements scored on 1-9 scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. Difference in means is significant at $p<.05$.

Statements with Significant Differences in Means Between Broadcast Journalism Students and General Sales Managers

Statement	Broadcast Journalism Students x	s.d.	General Sales Managers x	s.d.
6. If a news operation can go to anybody as a source on a story, they might as well use one of their advertisers as the source.	2.00	1.57	6.12	2.53

Statements scored on 1-9 scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. Difference in means is significant at $p<.05$.

Table 3

Statements with Significant Differences in Means Between Advertising Students and Media Directors

Statement	Advertising Students x	Advertising Students s.d.	Media Directors x	Media Directors s.d.
3. A journalist should not work for any news operation that puts any ratings pressure on them.	3.86	2.14	5.82	2.31
7. If a news program has no credibility, there's no value to an advertiser in promoting its product near that.	4.23	2.94	6.59	2.71
23. News departments function as the ideological arm of their chief sponsors -- the corporations whose advertising pays for what would otherwise be a losing business.	5.32	1.86	3.24	2.16
28. Advertiser influence on news content probably happens more often at the network level than at the local level.	5.50	2.11	3.85	1.92
29. It's in advertising's best interest to promote news programming free of commercial influence.	4.73	2.35	7.18	2.23

Statements scored on 1-9 scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree.
Difference in means is significant at $p<.05$.